



Customer Feedback and Complaints Procedure

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the Irish Research Council (IRC) are committed to dealing effectively with any complaints you may have about our service.

If we got something wrong, we will apologise and where possible we will try to put things right. We also aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain to improve our services.

Feedback can be provided directly to any of our staff at point of service delivery or to

Higher Education Authority or Irish Research Council 3 Shelbourne Buildings Shelbourne Road Dublin 4 e-mail: info@hea.ie or info@research.ie

Please note that separate appeals procedures apply in relation to funding applications in the IRC and HEA. These guidelines are available on the IRC's website [here](#) and in the relevant sections of the HEA's website.

Please also note that the HEA has issued separate guidelines for employees working in the Higher Education Institutions wishing to make protected disclosures under S.I 339/2014. These are available [here](#)

How we deal with other Customer Concerns/Complaints

We appreciate that you may have concerns in relation to other aspects of our work. For example, you may believe that we have not met our standards as set out in our [Quality Customer Service Plan](#) or that a decision was not clearly explained or that undue delay has occurred.

Where you have a concern or complaint about an action, or inaction, of the HEA or the IRC, please first bring it to the attention of the HEA or IRC officer who was directly involved.

Contact details for our staff are available on the [HEA website](#) or the [IRC website](#).

If your concern/complaint is not adequately resolved following direct contact with the officer involved or, you do not wish to raise the issue directly with them, you may raise it with the officer's manager.

The name of the manager can be obtained from the officer or from Human Resources.

The HEA/IRC manager will review the matter with you and with the officer and will reply to you.

Procedure in the event that a concern/complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved at the point of service delivery¹

If, having followed the above procedures, you consider that your concern has still not been satisfactorily resolved; you may make a more formal written complaint.

When making a formal complaint, please complete and sign the attached Form and return to :-

Customer Complaints Higher Education Authority 3 Shelbourne Buildings Shelbourne Road Dublin 4
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We will tell you who we have asked to investigate your complaint. Depending on the nature of the complaint we will address it in one or a number of the following ways;

1. Request the matter to be reviewed by the person who you dealt with in the first instance or if you prefer their line manager.
2. Refer the matter to the relevant Section Head.
3. Refer the matter to a Manager working in a different section.
4. In exceptional circumstances the HEA/IRC may have the matter investigated by a person outside the organisation.

¹ If, for a serious and stated reason, a complainant considers that s/he cannot raise a concern/complaint at point of service delivery or with the relevant line manager, s/he may raise the matter directly as a written complaint under the more formal written procedure. HEA/IRC expects however that customer concerns/complaints will, other than in exceptional circumstances, be appropriately initiated and resolved if possible at the point of service delivery. Accordingly, HEA/IRC may request a complainant to follow the normal process.

Before investigating your complaint, we will outline to you our understanding of your complaint and ask you to confirm that we have understood it correctly. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you are hoping for.

The person looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you do not want this to happen, it is important that you tell us.

We aim to resolve complaints as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 30 working days.

If your complaint is more complex we will:

- let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate
- tell you how long we expect it to take.
- give you regular updates on any progress made.

The person who is investigating your complaint will aim firstly to establish the facts. The extent of this investigation will depend on how complex and/or how serious the issues raised are. In complex cases, we will draw up an investigation plan.

In some instances, we may ask to meet you to discuss your complaint. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or an alternative method to resolve the dispute.

When investigating your complaint, we will look at relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, emails or whatever may be relevant to your complaint. If necessary, we will talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies and any guidance.

Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found using your preferred form of communication. This could be by letter or email, for example. If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we got it wrong, we will tell you what and why it happened. If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we will tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

If we got it wrong, we will always apologise.

Putting Things Right

If we did not do something well, we will aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part, we will, where practical, make every effort to put you back in the position you would have been in if we had got it right.

Complaint to Ombudsman

We hope that we have been able to resolve your complaint satisfactorily. However, if you remain unhappy with our response then you can refer your complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is impartial and free to use.

The Ombudsman will ask you for details of your complaint and to provide a copy of this letter (our final response to your complaint). The best way to do this is through:

- ‘Make A Complaint’ at www.ombudsman.ie

Office of the Ombudsman,
6 Earlfort Terrace,
Dublin 2,
D02 W772

or call 01 636 5600 if you have any queries

Notes re complaints

1. Complaints which are the subject of legal proceedings: The HEA/IRC cannot deal with a complaint that is the subject of civil litigation or criminal prosecution.

2. Our expectations in dealing with appeals and complaints: We will deal with our customers at all times with courtesy and respect. We also expect that our staff will be treated courteously and with respect.

You will appreciate that we do not expect our staff to accept abusive, offensive or threatening behaviour. If such a concern arises for a member of our staff (s)he will raise the matter with HEA/IRC management with a view to determining an appropriate and reasonable manner to deal with our customer's concerns in an appropriate way within the resources that we have available and which we will clearly communicate to the customer.

HEA/IRC Formal Complaints Form

I wish to make a formal complaint to the Higher Education Authority or the Irish Research Council in relation to a breach of its service commitments as outlined below:

Your Name: _____

Your Address: _____

Your Telephone Number: _____

Your Email Address: _____

Preferred Method of Communication: _____

Please provide details of the complaint – dates, times, nature of the complaint (*use separate page if necessary*):

Please clearly state, if relevant, how you consider that the HEA/IRC's standard of service was not met:

Please provide details of when you raised the complaint at point of service delivery and the outcome. If not raised at point of service delivery, please advise your reasons for not doing so:

Please provide details of any HEA/IRC staff member/s involved:

Have you already put your concern to the frontline staff responsible for delivering the service? If so, please give brief details of how and when you did so.

Please provide names and contact details of others who can provide relevant information:

What are you hoping to achieve e.g., an apology, explanation etc?

Please attach copies of any relevant documents or correspondence.

Your signature: _____

Date: _____